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Judge: publicity no issue in Rewald case

By Walter Wright
Advertiser Staff Writer

Despite an avalanche of publicity in the Ronald Rewald case, including a small landslide Monday, federal Judge Harold Fong said yesterday he expects to have a fair, impartial jury selected to hear opening arguments today.

Judge Fong said he hoped to accomplish in two days what Rewald said could never be done in Hawaii — find a jury not contaminated by publicity

about the sensational case.

Rewald faces 96 federal counts of perjury, fraud and tax evasion in connection with the operation of Bishop Baldwin Rewald Dillingham & Wong, which took investment deposits from the public.

The CIA admits giving the company \$2,700 for telephone and telex services it used to provide "commercial cover" for several personnel, but denies Rewald's claim that the CIA created and ran the company and is responsible for loss of

investor funds.

The trial promises to examine in detail Rewald's connection with the agency, and how \$22 million in investor funds was obtained and spent by Rewald and the firm to maintain a lavish life-style decorated with polo ponies, mansions, ranches, beautiful women and fancy cars.

The CIA link and Rewald's free spending have fascinated the media for two years, attracting coverage from national television networks and news magazines, the British Broadcasting Corporation and major newspapers across the country.

Judge Fong said yesterday that questioning indicates few prospective jurors read or watched much about the case, those that did remembered little, and those who had formed opinions said they could set

them aside.

On those grounds, Fong turned aside a new request by Rewald to move the trial to another location because of a story published Monday in The Star-Bulletin.

Rewald's attorneys said the story undercut Rewald's defenses and wondered if the prosecution had anything to do with getting it published.

Judge Fong, the prosecution and the reporter involved, Charles Memminger, all said there was nothing new in the story. Memminger characterized the full-page story as "a standard pre-trial wrapup" summarizing the case.

Fong continued yesterday his assembling of a pool of 40 potential jurors. From that pool, the attorneys from both sides today will select 12 regular jurors and six alternates.